

**House Education Committee  
Discussion on Graduation Requirements / Curriculum Reform  
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Glenna DeJong, Ph.D.  
Vice President of Educational Programs  
Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health, and Sports  
Michigan Fitness Foundation  
Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum (EPEC)



**MICHIGAN FITNESS FOUNDATION**

I applaud the efforts of the Michigan State School Board and the Michigan legislature to establish quality graduation requirements for our students. In my role as Vice President of Educational Programs for the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation, I am especially pleased that you have included Health and Physical Education as part of the requirement. To be competitive in the global economy, we need to adequately prepare our students for post-secondary education and workplace success. This includes providing them with a well-rounded education that develops them mentally and physically.

There is strong support for including quality, daily physical education in the school curriculum from the medical, public health, and education communities. They recognize the importance of equipping students with the knowledge, skills, fitness levels, competence and confidence needed to lead physically active, therefore healthful lives. Conversely, lack of physical activity has been shown to be a major contributor to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity and other chronic diseases.

Quality physical education programs are necessary if we hope to reverse the obesity and chronic disease trends that are plaguing our nation and that threaten the financial well being of America's businesses. In a 2004 study commissioned by MEDC (i.e., the Altarum Report), they found that Michigan's high rates of obesity, coronary heart disease, and diabetes are increasing healthcare costs and therefore healthcare premiums. Their number one recommendation was to redouble efforts to support health promotion and disease prevention, including language that states "Where possible, the state should enhance its programs to facilitate physical education."

I have worked with over 2000 physical educators in Michigan, helping them implement the Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum (EPEC), a program developed in Michigan and recognized by CDC as the best chronic disease prevention program in the country in 2002. Our long-term goal for Michigan is consistent with The U.S. Surgeon General, the Centers for Disease Control, and several educational organizations that call for quality, daily physical education in all school grades (K-12). Therefore, while we support the graduation requirements and the inclusion of health and physical education, we will continue to advocate for more instructional time in schools, including daily physical education in grades K-8.

The practice of substitution of other activities for the physical education requirement is an area of concern for physical educators at the local level. We are pleased that the graduation requirements as proposed do not allow for substitution of other activities such as ROTC or marching band for the physical education requirement. The current school code does allow for substitution; this practice is inconsistent with the language and intent of the State Board Policy on Quality Physical Education and does not meet the Content and Standards for Physical Education as outlined by the Michigan Department of Education. It would be equivalent to letting students substitute chess club for their math requirement because they did some problem solving, or letting students substitute the school play for their English requirement.

In closing, please hold firm in your commitment to include Health and Physical Education in the graduation requirements without substitution. Thank you for your time in thoughtfully considering the importance of these subjects in the school curriculum. Together we can prepare students for a lifetime of healthy, productive work and we can help employers contain expenses related to healthcare costs and lost productivity.